

**Testimony to the Appropriations Committee Regarding
H.B. 6659 *An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2025, and
Making Appropriations Therefor* (Health Agencies)**

Community Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention Funding

February 28, 2023

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Berthel, Representative Nuccio, and honorable members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Robert Dakers and I am a resident of Glastonbury. I am also writing as a member and current chair of Glastonbury First Church of Christ, Congregational's Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA) Team.

I am testifying in support of a \$20 million dollar allocation over three years to community violence reduction efforts in our urban areas across the state.

Although this amount was not specifically in the Governor's budget, it is vitally needed and will save lives. Street outreach programs such as Hartford Communities That Care, Mothers United Against Violence, and Compass Youth Collaborative are associated with up to 37 percent reductions in gun injuries. However, current funding for gun violence intervention and prevention in the state of Connecticut is not sufficient to sustain these organizations and further reduce gun violence.

In their report to the legislature in January of this year, the Connecticut Commission on Community Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention recommended that funding be allocated at the \$20 million dollar level over three years to provide resources and support for these efforts. The Commission, comprised of experts and those who have lost loved ones to gun violence, was launched in August 2022 of by the Governor in accordance with a bill passed by the legislature and is staffed by the Department of Public Health

Too many of our Connecticut neighbors are being taken from us through gun violence, with these losses disproportionately victimizing our Black and Brown siblings, their families and friends, and our city neighborhoods.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on this vital issue.